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THE BAPTIST DISTINCTIVE AND OBJECTIVE

JAMES S. KIRTLEY

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The BAPTIST DISTINCTIVE AND OBJECTIVE

A Revision of Chapters V and VI
In Part II of "You and Your Church"
(Being pages 56-122 of the Revised Book)

By
JAMES S. KIRTLEY, D. D.

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FOREWORD

In the volume published by The American Baptist Publication Society entitled "You and Your Church" are two chapters on the Baptist "Distinctive" and "Objective." Many who have read the book and also many who have heard my addresses on those two subjects have urged me to have those chapters printed in a separate volume for more rapid and general circulation.

It has seemed wise to do so, and I have carefully revised them, adding certain developments of the theme and making fuller quotations of the authorities for all the statements I have made. It is thought by wise brethren that this statement of our Baptist position may have special value at this transition period in our thinking and our activities.

These revised chapters will be inserted in the volume on "You and Your Church," and the Publication Society will continue to publish it for the special benefit of young Christians who need to study the whole matter of church-membership presented in the sixteen chapters of the

book. Many churches are already giving it to new members at the time of their baptism, with their names inscribed and a word of counsel from the pastor. That book will find an increasingly large demand, as it embodies all that this pamphlet presents and much more, for this smaller publication presents only the Baptist Distinctive and Objective.

This is an attempt to present in an historical and interpretative, rather than controversial, way what I believe to be the most important and attractive truth for mankind today.

V

THE BAPTIST DISTINCTIVE

Is there a Baptist Distinctive, one definite thing that makes one a Baptist—without which one is not a Baptist even though a member of a Baptist church—with which one is a Baptist in theory even though not a member of a Baptist church and a Baptist in practise when trying to live up to it?

There is such a Distinctive.

What is it?

1. What It Is Not

One person, knowing that we practise immersion and neither sprinkling nor pouring, says, "Immersion is your distinctive." My reply is that there are other denominations which practise immersion alone, the Greek Church, for instance, which is the present State Church of Greece and was formerly the State Church of Russia. Our distinctive is something that lies back of immersion and requires it.

Another, seeing that we never baptize infants, says, "Adult baptism must be your distinctive." That is a double mistake. We never use the term "adult baptism," for an adult is a grown person, and a child reaches the age when he may intelligently accept Christ and obey him in his ordi-

nance of baptism long before he is grown. No child ought to postpone the acceptance of Christ as his Saviour and obedience to him in baptism until he is an adult. I have baptized many boys and girls of twelve, many also of ten, some of nine, a few of eight, and once I baptized a little girl of seven, who was just as competent to accept Jesus and be baptized as if she were seventy. No, we do not say "adult," but "believer's baptism." Even that is not our distinctive, but the distinctive lies back of believer's baptism and requires it.

Still others, without much thought, may suppose it is our independent, congregational form of church government. No, some other denominations have that form of government who are not Baptists. Our distinctive lies back of that and requires it.

2. What It Is

When we find it, it must not be out of harmony with the human distinctive, for that would bring perpetual conflict. And what is the human distinctive? It is personality, and the distinctive of personality is consciousness, with power of choice and self-direction.

Nor may our distinctive be out of harmony with the divine distinctive. What is that? Exactly the same as the human: personality with consciousness, choice, self-direction. In Him it is perfect; in us imperfect. When God made man in his own image, that image was personality

which shows itself in consciousness, choice, self-direction. Our distinctive must not antagonize the distinctive of God or of man.

This is what it is: *Any person who ever lived or ever could live, has as much inherent right to deal personally with God as any other person who ever did or ever could live.* That is to say, there is something in the human soul, something in God, something in our relations to each other and to God, which makes it just as right for one person to have dealings with God as for any other person.

That distinctive has *a fourfold support:*

(1) In the fact that all men were made in the one image, not part of the human family in that image and part in another, but all in that image and therefore all with equal rights.

(2) In the universal human instinct of freedom. There never was a person born into the world who did not feel that he had as much right to be free as any one else, though we may find some in whom that instinct has been assassinated or asphyxiated, and who are perverted types of human beings.

(3) In the Christian instinct of fraternity which is found in all real Christians. In being born again we get a new type of love, as Paul says, "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." There is a love growing out of every relationship; and toward all other followers of Christ every real Christian has the feeling of a brother and an equal before God.

(4) In the definite word of Jesus when he said, "Call no man master on earth, for one is your master, even Christ," and again he says, "All ye are brethren."

The correlative of that distinctive is the obligation of all to have personal dealings with God, an obligation, however, which no other human being, but only God, can enforce. And he has made perfect arrangements to do so through Jesus Christ, in whom he has stored all authority; and he has made it all known in the story of Christ which we call the Bible, so that we can say with our Baptist fathers, "The Bible is our sole rule of faith and practise."

Such is our distinctive. No man nor group of men can stand between any soul and God and say to that soul: "Unless you pass through my hands you cannot have any dealings with God, cannot be saved; unless you accept my instructions and submit to my demands, God will not have anything to do with you." We say that only God can rule the soul, that he does so in Christ, and that he gives us adequate instructions about him and about all our duties in the Bible.

3. Interferences With Its Working

Grounded in the nature of man and the nature of God, with support in the human instinct of freedom and in the Christian instinct of fraternity, and recognized and commanded directly by Jesus our Master, how could it ever be overthrown or even overlooked?

It must be remembered that there are other elements in human nature. On the one hand, there are weaknesses of many kinds, such as fear, ignorance, superstition, and what the psychologists call the "inferiority complex." On the other hand we find vanity, pride of possession, passion for power and rulership, and the superiority complex. As a result the strong have domineered over the weak and made use of them; habits have been formed, traditions set in action, and institutions developed which have made it the interest of the strong to interfere with the working of that distinctive and impossible for the weak to maintain and assert their faith in their inherent rights.

The way it all came about opens one of the most tragical chapters in human history.

The first converts to the Christian faith were Jews, but soon Gentile converts began to come in. They came out of religions that were full of superstition. Two of those superstitions were that of the magical power of ceremonies and that of the magical power of a sacred order, a priesthood.

It was hard to throw off those superstitions. They clung to some of the converts who, when they saw the ceremony called baptism and the one called the Holy Supper, thought there must be magic in them. They talked about it; the idea spread. Soon they connected salvation with the ordinance of baptism; at length they said it was not only essential to salvation but was ac-

tually salvation itself, a "regenerating bath." In other words, a man stood between his fellow men and God and told them they could not reach God except through him; they must pass through his hands and be manipulated by him with the ordinance of baptism, else God would not save them, but would send them to hell.

That is *the first interference* with our distinctive which history reveals. By the end of the first century that idea was at work and at the time of Tertullian, who was active from about A. D. 190 to 220, it was generally held. He wrote, "Is it not wonderful that death should be washed away by bathing?" and again, "Water alone—always a perfect, gladsome, simple, material substance, pure in itself—supplied a worthy vehicle for God"; and, "Water was the first to produce that which had life, that it might be no wonder if in baptism water knew how to give life"; also, "The nature of the water, sanctified by the Holy One, itself conceived withal the power of sanctifying," and "All waters, therefore, in virtue of the pristine privilege of their origin, do, after invocation of God, attain the sacramental power of sanctification; for the Spirit immediately supervenes from the heavens and rests over the waters, sanctifying them from himself; and, being thus sanctified, they imbibe at the same time the power of sanctifying." In other words, a man got in between the soul and God and told him that, even though he had repented, he could not be saved unless he, the minister or

priest, brought about his salvation with the ceremony of baptism.

That defeated the very purpose of Jesus in giving baptism. He gave it as a symbol of death and resurrection, as Paul tells us in Romans 6 : 3-6: " We are buried with him by baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: for, if we have been in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection."

In being baptized one is preaching the gospel in a living tableau, saying, " This is a picture of what saves me, namely, the death of Christ for my sins and his resurrection for my justification." One is also telling one's Christian experience, saying, " This is a picture of the way it saved me, by my dying to sin and rising to a new life." One is also proclaiming one's hope of resurrection, saying in symbol, " This is a picture of what my body shall experience when it is raised from the grave."

But Christ's purpose was defeated when they made baptism a saving rather than a symbolical ordinance. Baptism is gone, even though the form might remain.

Evil results followed from which the Christian world is suffering even today. An almost inevitable change in the ordinance of baptism took place. A man was dying. He had repented of his sins and was trusting in Christ for salvation, but he could not be baptized. They were in a

dilemma. If he died without baptism, he would go to hell; if they attempted to baptize him, it would kill him and send him to hell so much quicker. Instead of telling the poor fellow that baptism had nothing on earth to do with his salvation and that faith in a living and loving and mighty Saviour was the only requirement, they told him there was no hope for him at all. And they were actually honest about it. How they could think God was such a being is beyond me. A God who would not listen to the cry of such a penitent and would send him to hell for want of manipulation by some one with a material ceremony, even so sacred and beautiful a ceremony as baptism, is a God whom every free and rational soul would have to despise.

But there is usually a way out of every difficulty, whether a right or a wrong way, and it is not surprising that finally one man tapped his dome of thought and said, with unspeakable relief: "I have it. Let's pour water all over him and make it look as much like baptism as possible, and perhaps the church will accept it, not as the real thing, but as a substitute allowable in the circumstances."

It was accepted reluctantly and under protest. But the next time it was easier, and from pouring water all over a person to pouring it on his forehead, and finally sprinkling it on him was a perfectly easy and natural transition. The sprinkling and pouring were not regarded as baptism but as permissible substitutes, and thus we

have the two substitutes based on the superstition that baptism is a saving rather than a symbolical ordinance.

No one claimed that they were the real baptism. They knew the meaning of the three Greek words —*baptizo,* to immerse, *rhantizo,* to sprinkle, and *ccheo,* to pour. We transfer the word *baptizo* into our language, and call it "baptize," and the noun *baptisma* we call baptism. If we had translated it we should have said "immerse" and "immersion." They never thought of translating the word by "sprinkling" or "pouring" any more than the word *rhantizo* by the word "immerse" or "pour," or the word *echeo* by "sprinkle" or "immerse." It was generations after that, when the two substitutes gained a vogue of their own, that those who practised them sought to find support for them in the Bible, and even today some are trying to do so. No scholar now claims that the word transferred into our language and called "baptize" means anything more than "immerse," nor does any historian claim that sprinkling and pouring are anything but man-made substitutes based on the idea of baptismal salvation. Every time one of the substitutes is used it is a proclamation of the superstition out of which it arose.

All the scholars affirm that Jesus and his disciples used the word which means immerse and never used the well-known words which mean sprinkle and pour. (See especially Liddell and Scott's and Thayer's New Testament lexicons.)

The great classical writers, both Greek and Latin, agree with them. The Greek Fathers, from Barnabas, A. D. 117, to Basil, A. D. 330, know only immersion. The Latin Fathers from Tertullian, A. D. 150, to Alcuin, A. D. 735, agree with them. All the councils of the Roman church, from the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, to the Council of Nismes, A. D. 1284, decreed immersion and only allowed sprinkling and pouring when immersion was not possible. The church liturgies and rituals, Gothic, Syrian, Italian, French, English, prescribe immersion, in accordance with which, as Dean Stanley asserts, " Edward VI and Elizabeth were both immersed." The Greek church, in Greece and Russia, which ought to know the meaning of Greek words, practises only immersion. Catholic writers like Cardinal Gibbons, and Episcopal writers like Wall, Dean Stanley, Ellicott, Geike, Canon Liddon, Dean Alford, Edersheim, Bishop Cleveland Cox, Canon Farrar; and Presbyterian writers like Calvin, Beza, Zwingle, Turretin, Baxter, George Campbell, Philip Schaff, Trumbull; and Methodists like Wesley, Adam Clarke, C. W. Bennett, J. F. Hunt; the great Lutherans, like Martin Luther, Meyer, Harnack, and others say immersion is the meaning of the word baptism, and was the practise of the early centuries. The great commentators, like Meyer, Godet, Ellicott, Lightfoot, Olshausen, Plumptree, and others, too numerous to name, testify to the same thing. So do writers on the life of Christ and the life of Paul, like Geike, Stalker, Eder-

sheim, Conybeare and Howson. A few words from Dean Stanley, of the Church of England, will sum up the testimony of hundreds of Pedobaptist scholars:

> For the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practise of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word baptize, that those who were baptized were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water.

And again:

> There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters, and that for the first four centuries any other form was either unknown, or regarded, unless in the case of dangerous illness, as an exceptional, almost a monstrous case. The change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism, and has altered the very meaning of the word.

The two substitutes were bitterly opposed except in cases of critical sickness, but by the time of the Catholic Council of Ravenna, 1311, they had won their way and were officially pronounced real baptism by the church on the ground that the church had the right to change the form of baptism. But every time one of the substitutes is used it is a proclamation of the superstition out of which it arose.

A second interference with our distinctive came as a matter of course. If no one can be saved without baptism, then infants dying unbaptized

will go to hell. It will not do to let God send the innocent things to hell, so they administered baptism to them—something done to the child without his knowledge or consent rather than something done by the child out of loving loyalty to Christ when he can accept him as Saviour and Master and obey him from choice.

At first, they baptized only children who were in immediate danger of death. Later they concluded that baptism was necessary in order to cleanse out hereditary sin. Still later, they came to believe that mortal sins committed after baptism could never be forgiven, so they waited until they thought the child was strong enough to guard himself against mortal sins before they baptized him. But by the middle of the third century they had developed their theology so as to admit that those who had lapsed into mortal sin after baptism might be restored and, from that time, the practise of infant baptism has been very prevalent. It was all done to save the child from hell in case he died in infancy. What a strange and repulsive God they made of our loving heavenly Father. Infant baptism constituted the second interference with the working of our distinctive.

A third interference was developing. One of the superstitions which some of the converts from the Gentile religions brought with them was that of the magical power of a priesthood. Power began to become localized in the officers of the church and those officers became graded. If one

person has as much inherent right as another to deal personally with God, then one group has as much right as another group, without overhead control from any man or set of men; but that was changed and a hierarchy grew up with *power centered in bishops and archbishops,* and, the perversion became complete, it all *headed up in the pope of Rome.* I cannot do better than quote from Dr. A. H. Newman in his " History of Anti-Pedobaptism:

Other perversions of Christianity during the early centuries are so universally recognized by historians and so familiar to all readers of church history, that they need only be barely mentioned here. Sacerdotalism, a constant factor in pagan religious systems, soon intruded itself into the Christian church. The ordinances, having become mysteries, must be administered by a ceremonially qualified priesthood; and, as the services became elaborate and each function must be performed by a properly qualified functionary, clerical gradations came to be multiplied and accurately differentiated. Out of the simple polity of the apostolic time, in accordance with which each congregation chose its own bishops or presbyters and deacons for the direction of the spiritual work of the body, the administration of discipline and the collection and distribution of charities, there was developed, under the influences of the time, a system of presidential administration in which the chief elder (or bishop) directed the affairs of the local church with the assistance and advice of a board of presbyters. As the responsible head of the church he soon came to have chief control of the finances, and such control tended to increase his relative importance. As Christian work spread from older centers the newly established congregations were kept in relations of dependence on the mother church, or, rather, as integral

parts thereof. Thus the pastor of the central church would have the supervision of a greater or smaller number of outside congregations, over each of which a presbyter of the central church came to preside. Thus arose diocesan episcopacy. At first this arrangement was adopted without any ambitious intentions on the part of the pastors as seemingly the most effective way of conducting Christian work. But, as the dependent congregations became conscious of strength and their presbyter-pastors became restless under episcopal control, which in some cases was no doubt arbitrarily exercised, friction arose between bishops and presbyters. By that time (about the middle of the third century—the case of Cyprian and the Carthaginian presbyters is in point) the sacerdotal idea was pretty fully developed. Cyprian and those who were like-minded believed that ecclesiastical unity was absolutely essential and that schism was one of the greatest of evils. They went so far as to maintain that outside of the one ecclesiastical organization, whose center of unity was found in the episcopate, there is no salvation. By the strong opposition that the presbyters made to the assumption of authority on the part of the bishops the latter were led to assert the divine right and the irresponsibility of bishops. The same sense of the necessity of organic union and unity of administration afterward led to the centralization of authority in metropolitans and finally in the papacy.

To quote further from Doctor Newman:

No less destructive of the spirit of primitive Christianity was the early intrusion of the doctrine of the meritoriousness of external works. Jews and pagans alike attached great merit to almsgiving, fasting, and the frequent utterance of fixed forms of prayer. By the middle of the third century leading churchmen like Cyprian did not hesitate to teach that almsgiving is a means of securing the remission of sins and of purchasing an eternal inheritance.

Asceticism also was imported into early Christianity from paganism. This disposition to regard the body as intrinsically evil and all natural impulses as worthy only of being trampled upon is a common feature of pagan religions. Fanatical seeking for martyrdom, excessive fasting, and the exaltation of virginity were the earliest forms of Christian asceticism. It culminated in the brutalities of hermit life.

Superstition and idolatry were universally prevalent in ancient paganism as they are in modern. They pervaded and corrupted every department of life and occupied a most prominent place in the popular consciousness. In proportion as Christianity increased in popular influence and enjoyed immunity from persecution was the accession to the church of unchristianized or imperfectly Christianized life. Not only did the ordinances assume a pagan hue and sacerdotal and ascetic ideas become prevalent, but idolatrous practises corresponding in almost every detail with those of the surrounding heathenism came to be openly indulged in and regarded as Christian. The exaltation of saints and martyrs, the worship of images of Christ and the saints, the veneration of bones and other relics of the worthies of the past, pilgrimages to shrines and other holy places, vigils at the tombs of saints, the invocation of Mary the mother of Jesus as "the mother of God," the invocation of saints, belief in the efficacy of relics and shrines to cure diseases—these and many like superstitious practises were countenanced by some of the ablest and holiest of the Christian leaders of the fourth and following centuries and, by the fifth century, had become well-nigh universal.

Thus we see that two forces were at work changing the church, one from the inside, another from without. People came into the church to be saved, not because they were saved. They reversed the essential order by trying to get to

Christ through the church instead of getting into the church through Christ. The church filled up with people who were not Christians at all and they brought their paganism with them. The church of the apostles was gone and a semi-heathen organization had now been developed in its place.

A fourth interference came along with the development of the power of this tremendous organization, and that was *the union of Church and State.* The Roman Emperors were shrewd rulers and showed a masterful skill in controlling the nations which they conquered. Their method was to Romanize them as thoroughly as possible. They knew the value of religion and its sanctions in controlling their subjects. Constantine was converted before his death, and his successor, Theodosius, who felt the need of this rising religion in his business of ruling, adopted it, uniting Church and State in one of the most unholy unions that ever disgraced humanity. For a State Church is a twofold monstrosity—a perversion of the function of government and an assault on the most distinctive thing in human nature, namely, the power of choice. Through the centuries many thousands were made martyrs through the operation of that inhuman infamy which for so long occupied the seat of power, successfully maintaining itself against protest and challenge and denunciation.

From that day till the year 1638 there was not a country on the face of the earth where the

Christian religion prevailed but Church and State were united in compelling the people to support the Church and in suppressing any effort of anybody to exercise his God-given right of dealing with God personally as he and the Spirit of God might order.

A fifth interference was in *taking the Bible away from the people* as a dangerous book and making the church superior to it. The officials knew that if the people read the Bible they would revolt against their unbiblical, unchristian, and inhuman assumption of the authority that belongs to God alone, so they said to the people, "You cannot understand it, besides you have not time to read it; we will read it and tell you all you need to know."

So here are the five interferences with the working of our distinctive in their historical sequence: Putting one man between other men and God and requiring them to pass through his hands and be manipulated with the beautiful ordinance of baptism; secondly, administering baptism to infants instead of allowing them to obey Christ for themselves when they are old enough to accept him; thirdly, by destroying the independence of groups of individuals called churches and developing a graded official life in which was centered all authority over the local churches; fourthly, the unholy union of Church and State; fifthly, denying the Bible to the laity and making it second in authority to the officials who constituted the Church.

4. The Age-long Effort for the Recovery of the Distinctive

Three things are necessary for its recovery.

(1) *The Idea Itself.* That cannot be permanently lost as long as there are human beings with the instinct of freedom to assert itself sooner or later, with the Christian instinct of fraternity to demand for others what it claims for itself, with the great fact of the one single image of God which is in any one person as truly as in any other, and with the words of Jesus forever ringing in the ears of Christian people, "Call no man master on earth, for one is your Master, even Christ." The idea persists.

(2) But there must be *advocates of that idea.* When people joined the church in order to become Christians it is fair to say they did not become Christians, except in limited numbers, for that is not the way to become Christians, and those actually did become so in spite of the wrong way. Among those who were actual Christians and not simply church-members, most of them would get hold of the idea and some of them would have the courage to speak out. Of course they suffered more than ostracism. It meant persecution and often death.

They propagated the idea in two ways. One way was by agitation. They did it not for themselves alone, but for those who would deny them their rights. Some of them were radical and "one-ideaed," as we sometimes say. Of course

they were. Some did not have the idea whole, but they had hold of it. They were wise enough not to agitate for civil liberty, but only for their religious rights. Some were far-sighted enough to know that civil liberty would finally come as a result, as a sort of by-product, we might say. They knew that, if they once got the rulers to recognize the rights of conscience, civil liberty would become a fact, whatever the outward form of government. They knew that if they advocated a form of government corresponding to the form of church polity which they held, they would lose both battles, so they kept to the main issue, knowing that, when hearts were changed and charged with fraternal love, right personal and political relations would come mainly by vital processes. They were right.

The other way was by illuminating with their personal lives as free men in Christ Jesus and with their group life.

(3) A *place* where that idea would be allowed to grow and work itself out was essential. We have to remember that, wherever Christianity prevailed in the whole world, it was a state religion and used the arm of the law to prevent freedom of worship, taxing all for the support of itself, fining and imprisoning and torturing and murdering those who dared to try to worship God as their own consciences and the Bible directed. That was the case almost everywhere, and those agitators were driven on from place to place and from country to country.

They lived in Italy, Switzerland (called Helvetia), France, Germany, Spain, the British Isles, Bohemia, Holland. That is, they tried to live in those places. Whether it meant death or not, they advocated that undying truth and suffered. "During the fourth and fifth centuries," to quote again from Doctor Newman,

> British Christians seem to have held aloof in a measure from the paganizing influences in which the continental church became involved. Diocesan Episcopacy seems not to have existed. The study of the Scriptures was pursued with zeal in the numerous semi-monastic colleges for the training of pastors and missionaries. An extensive and successful missionary work was carried on in Ireland, Scotland, France, and Germany. Human authority in matters of religion was indignantly repudiated. Humility and simplicity in Christian life were insisted upon, and the pomp and worldliness of the Roman missionaries, who sought to convert them, proved highly offensive. An example of their missionary activity is the work of Patrick (A. D. 432 onward) who evangelized more or less thoroughly the whole of Ireland and left a reputation for sanctity of life and spiritual power that entitles him to be considered one of the greatest of missionaries.

Another Irish Christian was Columba, who, in the sixth century, planted evangelical churches throughout Scotland. Still another Irishman was Columbanus, who, with thirteen companions, established missions in Burgundy, Switzerland, and Northern Italy. The work inaugurated by him was carried into the Rhine Valley, Thuringia, Bavaria, and Southeastern Germany. Ebrard writes that there existed "a flourishing, well-or-

ganized, Rome-free church whose only supreme authority was the holy Scriptures, whose preaching was the word of the free, redeeming grace of God."

The same writer goes on:

> A simple, but well-organized church existed from the Pyrenees to the Scheldt, from Chur to Utrecht, whose only crime was that it did not recognize the Roman Church as its supreme head; hence also knew no new invocation of saints, no mass, no auricular confession and the like and did not do homage to gross Pelagianism but preached justification through faith.

Forster describes that church as "recognizing the Scriptures as its completely sufficient norm."

Doctor Newman further says:

> Notwithstanding the terrible persecutions to which they were subjected during the seventh and following centuries by the Saxon kings at the instigation of the Roman Church, Christians of the ancient British type are known to have maintained their existence in considerable numbers, especially in Wales and Scotland, until the eleventh century. It is probable that they were never completely destroyed and that they reappeared in the Lollards of the fourteenth century.

These and other bodies of people had hold of the distinctive, though not always in its wholeness; they released it and sent it on its way down the centuries.

From the twelfth century on its advocates became more constant, more coherent. About the year 1173 Peter Waldo, a wealthy man of Lyons, France, gave up his property and devoted him-

self to preaching the gospel. He and his followers established churches in France, Italy, Bohemia, Southern Germany, and the southwestern provinces of Austria.

There were sects called Taborites and Bohemian Brethren and Moravians and Pickards, who held the distinctive more or less whole. Peter Chelcicky of Bohemia, the spiritual father of the Bohemian Brethren, carried the doctrine of personal liberty farther than most others had done.

These bodies of Christians, who opposed the union of Church and State on principle and not simply in order to gain their own rights, were the thinkers who brought on the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Usually they were called "nicknames" by their enemies, from the names of prominent leaders or the locations where they carried on, or names indicating some peculiarity.

Many groups of them came to be called "Rebaptizers." You readily see why. When a person was converted through their agency and was told of the requirement to follow Jesus in his ordinance of baptism, but was informed he had been baptized in infancy, his reply was that it was something done to him and not by him, and he must be baptized for himself. So their enemies called the group by the Greek word "Anabaptists," which means "Rebaptizers."

These were the agitators who prepared the way for Martin Luther, and they won his assent to the fact of immersion as baptism and to the wrongness of both infant baptism and the union

of Church and State. But Luther had come straight out of the heart of the Roman Church, and his theology had much of Rome in it. Besides, he was an autocrat by nature and by the discipline of a church in which there were but two classes, the ruling and the ruled classes, the one above him that ruled him and the one below whom he and his fellow priests were to rule.

These Anabaptists were the real thinkers of the Reformation. When Luther came from the Wartburg to Wittenburg and found that three Anabaptists, Nicolas Storch, Max Stübner, and Thomas Munzer, had captured the intellects of Cellarius and Carlstadt and even of Melancthon, he was filled with rage and drove them off, saying to Stübner, "God punish you, Satan." That swing from the clear thinking of the Anabaptists to which he had really assented, drove him to accept infant baptism as a means of perpetuating his church, for he was afraid to trust the gospel alone, and it led him to retain connection with the state in order that he might not lose the support of which he felt such great need. While he said again and again that immersion alone was baptism, he retained the two substitutes. He retained the doctrine of Rome as to the Lord's Supper as a sacrament and not a symbol. Had he accepted the distinctive whole and lived it there would have been no State Church in the part of Germany which he influenced and the place in which the idea could be domesticated and thence transplanted would have been secured therein.

A new country must be found for it. God had that country awaiting the eye and the foot of man. He utilized the man best fitted of all the men then living to find it and make it known. That man knew nothing at all about the distinctive, nor about the purpose of God in directing him to this land. He was like other Catholics, and the thought of religious liberty had never penetrated his mind. He had reached the conclusion that the earth is round, and he had dreams of finding India and China by this route and enjoying all the luxuries of the Orient. He had the traits for the adventure. When he had discovered the land and made it known, his providential task was done.

The rulership of the land must not be entrusted to those who could not plant that idea here. The Latin races, with many admirable characteristics, were all Roman Catholic, and they had not the least conception of liberty of conscience. Although the Baptists of England had been persecuted by their own countrymen, they belonged to the one race which at that time was most capable of being the guardian of the idea, the Anglo-Saxon. God was directing.

There were *three types* of people who came here from England at an early date, besides smaller groups from Holland and Sweden and France and other lands.

First were the early settlers of Virginia. They were State Church people, members of the Established Church. They were the *Cavaliers,*

worldly and strangers to the idea of religious liberty. They taxed all the people to support their church and later, when our Baptist fathers claimed the right to worship God as they were taught in his Word, they fined them and whipped them, and put them in prison. They punished those who committed the crime of preaching the gospel of Christ. James Madison, who had talked with many Baptists of the principle of religious liberty, wrote to a friend in Philadelphia,

> that diabolical, hell-conceived principle of persecution rages among some, and to their eternal infamy the clergy can furnish their quota of imps for such purposes. There are at the present time, in the adjacent county, not less than five or six well-meaning men in close jail for proclaiming their religious sentiments, which are in the main quite orthodox.

That was in Virginia. God could not use that group to plant the idea here, for they did not have it.

A second group we call the *Puritans.* They settled in Boston and Salem and were called Puritans because they believed in a purer life than prevailed in the Church of England. They did not leave their church at first but came here with the hope of establishing a purer type of Christian life. They had no more idea of religious liberty than the people they left behind in England. They are the ones who hung witches and Quakers and whipped Baptists and felt that in so doing they were rendering distinguished and meritorious service to God. Some one said of them that they

came here to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences and to make every body else do the same. They were just as intolerant of those who differed from them as were their less religious brethren down in Virginia. They were not Separatists when they came, though many of them did separate from the State Church after a while. They did not bring the distinctive, did not have it to bring.

A third group were the *Pilgrim Fathers* who landed at Plymouth Rock in December, 1620. They belonged to the Independents or Congregationalists who were known as Separatists in England, because they separated from the State Church, and also Independents because they believed in the independent form of church government. The term Puritan is sometimes applied to them in a general way. They demanded absolute religious liberty for themselves and were the best people religiously who had come to this country, but did not have that distinctive, for they united State and Church in an indissoluble pact, taxed people of all faiths to support their church, enforced their claims on all regardless of their conscientious convictions, and required that a person be a member of the church before he could vote. In Connecticut, as late as 1833, the State taxed the people as a whole, regardless of church connections, to support the Church, and they did the same in Massachusetts as late as 1834.

I select several instances from Nathaniel Morton's " Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers," show-

ing the spirit of the colonies both at Salem and Plymouth. At Salem two non-conformist ministers, named Skelton and Higginson, came over from England and were ordained August 6, 1629. Mr. Higginson was instructed to draw up a confession of faith and a covenant, and from it I quote the following with a shudder:

> And because they foresaw that this wilderness might be looked upon as a place of liberty and therefore might in time be troubled with erroneous spirits, therefore they did put in one article into the confession of faith, on purpose, about the duty and power of the *magistrate* in matters of religion.

In other words, they intended to be in a position to use the civil officers in dealing with any one who should even express, much less act upon, the conviction that America was a land of religious liberty. That was in Salem where we have learned to expect such things. The same year there came two brothers named Brown, one a lawyer, the other a merchant, who insisted on holding public services and using the Church of England services from the Book of Common Prayer. But the governor and council passed on the matter and "the governor told them that New England was no place for such as they, and therefore he sent them back to England at the return of the ship the same year;" in other words, sent them back in the same ship that brought them.

Another instance seems laughable today. On August 7, 1667, Rev. John Wilson, pastor of the church in Boston, was on his death-bed and was

asked by those who thought his judgment would have special value as he saw the world recede from him "what he conceived to be those sins amongst us which provoked the displeasure of God against the country." His reply was that he had often thought the three sins were Separation, Anabaptism, and Korahism. The first he did not explain, but probably he meant separation from the Church of England. By Anabaptism he said he meant "for our neglect of baptizing the children of the church I think God is provoked by it." By Korahism he meant that the people would rise up and contradict their ministers and teachers.

The above three groups utterly failed to bring the distinctive. Some one must bring it, if God's purpose was not to be thwarted. There was only one group that had it whole and there was not one of them among the Cavaliers or the Puritans or the Pilgrims.

But wait. God is at work. It will come in an unexpected way.

A new minister came to Boston. He was of Welsh extraction and had been brought up in the Established Church, but he had been listening to those Anabaptists, by this time called Baptists. He had begun to imbibe their great idèa, but had not yet separated himself from the church of his childhood. When he came to Boston the people thought they had captured the very best preacher anywhere. But he began to release that idea in his sermons and then they revised their original

valuation of him. He was hardly as good a preacher as they at first thought, for he hinted that the police court of Boston had no right to determine the conduct of church services or the sermons of the ministers. That was shocking.

Presently he went up to Salem, where the big idea came out stronger, and that made life still more uncomfortable for him. Then he tried Plymouth and was rebuked for that sort of preaching. He went back to Salem, where he became still more pronounced. He found that the Puritans of Salem and Boston were just as intolerant as was Archbishop Laud of England. He saw that the union of Church and State was unbiblical and unnatural, a perversion of the function of government, and an assault on the most distinctive thing in human nature, the power and right of choice. At first his revolt against both the Puritan and Pilgrim churches was not so much against their doctrines as against their principle of a State Church with its essential denial of the right of thought and choice and self-direction for every man.

His banishment from Salem was decided upon by the court of " prudent magistrates " in Boston, the charge against him being that he taught " that the magistrate ought not to punish the breach of the first table otherwise than in such case as did disturb the civil peace." The " first table " meant religious worship.

The decree of banishment continues, " Whereas Mr. Roger Williams, one of the elders of the

church of Salem, hath broached and divulged new and dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates," as Morton says, " a disturber of the peace both of the church and commonwealth."

So this man was banished because he believed and taught that no Church, or Church and State combined, had the right to control a person in his relations to and his dealings with his God.

Then that man decided to do a thing that proved to be the greatest deed since the days of the apostles, the one thing for which the groaning centuries had been waiting, for which humanity, whether consciously or unconsciously, had been longing, toward which God had been working for ages. After walking southward through the deep snows, accompanied by a little group of brave souls who felt the power of that newly discovered distinctive, he bought a piece of land from the Indians near Narragansett Bay, wrote a constitution for the government of the people who should live there, and put into that constitution a clause that had never before in the history of the world been written into any constitution for the government of any people, and that clause said that everybody should have the right under that government to worship God according to his own judgment, whether he was pagan, or Jew, or Christian of any denomination, or member of no church. They called that place which he had thus preempted in the name of liberty by the gracious name of " Providence." They organized the first Baptist church of that city and of the

nation. He and the original settlers entered into a glorious compact which read thus:

> We whose names are hereunder written, being desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves in *active and passive obedience to all such orders or agencies* as shall be made for the public good of the body in an orderly way by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated into a township, and of such others whom they shall admit into the same, *only in civil things.*

That was in March, 1638. The substance of the contract was reaffirmed in another document signed in 1640. The same principles were embodied in the code of laws adopted by the colony in 1647 and finally incorporated in the Royal Charter given by Charles II in 1663:

> Our Royal will and pleasure is that no person within the said colony at any time hereafter shall be in any way molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences of opinion in matters of religion and do not actually disturb the civil peace of the said colony.

Thus, for the first time in the history of humanity, a state laid its corner-stone in the basic principle of equal liberty for all. There had been at times some toleration in European countries for people holding different views from those of the State Church, but toleration and liberty are two distinct and essentially conflicting things.

When a memorial to Roger Williams was placed in the national capitol in 1872, Senator Anthony said:

Roger Williams did not merely lay the foundations of religious freedom; he constructed the whole edifice, in all its impregnable strength and in all its imperishable beauty. Religious freedom, which now, by general consent, underlies the foundation principles of civilized government, was, at that time, looked upon as a wilder theory than any proposition, moral, political, or religious, that has since engaged the serious attention of mankind. It was regarded as impracticable, disorganizing, impious, and if not utterly subversive of social order, it was not so, only because its manifest absurdity would prevent any serious effort to enforce it.

There was one early instance of toleration in this country that has been sometimes claimed as religious liberty, but that is very far from the truth. I read in the speech of a prominent man who was a candidate for an eminent office that the first instance of religious liberty in our country was in Maryland and in the Bill of Toleration granted by Lord Baltimore, a Catholic, who founded that province.

The claim is correct except in four particulars: (1) As to the time. That Bill of Toleration was adopted in 1649 while Roger Williams wrote his document in 1638, eleven years earlier. (2) As to liberty. Lord Baltimore granted toleration, not liberty. He bestowed it, but neither he nor any one else could bestow liberty. They could recognize it as an inalienable right which no man on earth could give. (3) Lord Baltimore did it under compulsion, Williams recognized it as each man's right. Lord Baltimore's people were Catholics but lived under a Protestant govern-

ment, and would not have been allowed by that government to deny one of its Protestant provinces their right of worship. With Williams and his friends it was a matter of conviction that all men had that right, and he acted on the principle of eternal right. (4) Lord Baltimore belonged to a Church that had never in a single instance recognized that people had such a thing as the inborn right to liberty of worship. That church was the State Church in most of the nations of Europe till that union was broken in several countries, as Germany, England, Sweden, Holland, etc., and Catholic countries had never taken advantage of any one of their many opportunities to recognize that people could worship God as they thought best. The Catholic Church did not even grant that toleration in Maryland, but one of its members, under compulsion of England, gave toleration instead of liberty. It would have used Lord Baltimore to set up a State Church, prisons, thumscrews, racks, and all, if it had been allowed, while Williams and his friends belonged to a church whose very nature compelled it to act as he did and whose history had been one prolonged effort to procure and secure religious liberty not for themselves alone but for all, even for those who, if they had had the power, would have denied it to them.

The Catholics could no more recognize the freedom of the soul than could Baptists deny it. It is of the nature and structure of their organization. To recognize it would be to destroy the whole

system. They say that the Church, through its officials, can forgive sins, can deny salvation to any one, and has the right to rule the souls of all men as God's vice-gerent, vice-ruler. When the pope speaks "ex cathedra," he cannot make a mistake, because the Holy Spirit will not allow it, and the faithful must accept what he says as a deliverance from God. If they do not, they are not the faithful, but reprobates to be punished for not surrendering their divinely given right to deal personally with their God and Father.

Take a few quotations from Catholic authorities:

We do, on the part of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and also by the authority of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own, excommunicate and curse all Hussites, Wicliffites, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists, Huguenots, Anabaptists, Trinitarians and Apostates from Christ, and all and Sundry other heretics, by whatsoever name they are reckoned, and of whatsoever sect they may be, and their receivers, aiders, and abettors and in general all their defenders whatsoever, and those who without our authority and that of the Apostolic See knowingly read or retain or print or in any way defend the books containing their heresy or treating of religion (*Extract from Bull in Coena Domini, by Pope Paul V*).

The above is published in Rome every year on Maundy Thursday.

The bishop takes this oath:

To the utmost of my power I will persecute and attack heretics, schismatics, and rebels against our lord (the Pope), and his aforesaid successors.

Canons IX and X, Council of Trent, say,

If any one shall say that sacramental absolution by a priest is not a judicial act, but a mere ministry . . . even though the priest should not absolve seriously but in a joke, let him be accursed.

Extract from creed of Pope Pius IV:

I likewise admit the Holy Scriptures according to that sense which our Holy Mother, the Church, has held and does hold, whose province it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scripture . . . Whatsoever is condemned by the Church I, in like manner, condemn, reject and anathematize.

To the same effect speak *Canones et Decreti Concilii Tridentini,* and the authoritative Catechism of Council of Trent, "Faith of Our Fathers," by Cardinal Gibbons, and scores of others.

To the above quotations I add a confirming word by the scintillating Papini, an Italian Catholic layman, who wrote a brilliant and erratic "Life of Christ" several years ago.

Protesting against the work of Protestants among the Italians he says:

Leave us under the tyranny of the Pope; it is a tyranny established by Christ, the tyranny of a father, and we prefer it infinitely to the tyranny of pastors, of quacks, of consistories, and of books. We "savages," we medievalists still hold to the bull *Unam Sanctam,* which says: *"We assert, declare, define, and pronounce that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff is absolutely necessary to salvation."* We demand but little, only one thing: that you subscribe

with us to the documents issued from the Vatican during the past seventy years, from the Syllabus of Pius X to the encyclical *Ubi arcano Dei* of Pius XI inclusive.

The spread of religious liberty to the other States and its final adoption into the Constitution of the United States is a story of thrilling heroism on the part of our Baptist fathers.

Several instances of the inhumanity with which they were treated by State Churches must be given in order to set forth the facts of history clearly. One is the case of Henry Dunstan, the first president of Harvard University. I quote from Dr. Henry C. Vedder's "A Short History of the Baptists," p. 197:

For preaching against infant baptism this learned, godly, and zealous man was indicted by the Grand Jury, condemned to suffer a public admonition, and placed under bonds for good behavior, finally being compelled to resign the presidency of the college of which he had been the greatest benefactor. Shortly afterward he was arraigned for refusing to have his child baptized but was saved from further persecution by his death.

Another instance was that of John Clarke, who founded the First Baptist Church of Newport, and Obadiah Holmes, and I quote again from Doctor Vedder:

While they were spending the Lord's Day with a brother who lived near Lynn it was concluded to have religious services in the house. Two constables broke in while Mr. Clarke was preaching from Revelation 3 : 10, and the men were haled before the court. For this offense they were sentenced to pay, Clarke a fine

of twenty pounds and Holmes one of thirty pounds, in default of which they were to be "well whipped." A friend paid Clarke's fine and he was set at liberty, whether he would or not, but Holmes was "whipped unmercifully" (the phrase is Bancroft's) in the streets of Boston for the atrocious crime of preaching the gospel and of adding thereto the denial of infant baptism.

But just before the lash was laid upon Holmes he said to the bystanders, "Good people all, I am now about to be baptized with the baptism of affliction that so I may have fellowship with my Lord."

The way the great distinctive spread from Rhode Island into the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the several States, one by one, is a fascinating study. It should be noted that the Constitution of the United States, as originally adopted, did not forbid the union of Church and State, said nothing about it. Our Baptist forefathers knew there was danger lurking in that silence, but they supported George Washington and the other leaders who with very great difficulty secured its adoption by the thirteen States. But there was one thing in the Constitution which gave them hope. That was the method which the document provided for its own amendment. They said to each other, "We will adopt it and then amend it." So, at once, they won the aid of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and other men of balanced judgment in getting the First Amendment to the national Constitution passed. This brief but meaningful safeguard of religious liberty reads as follows:

> Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

The States took it up, one by one later, and wrote the equivalent of it into their constitutions, Connecticut retaining the old régime of taxing all people for the support of the Congregational church till 1833, and Massachusetts till 1834.

At last *the distinctive had found a place* where it could be domesticated and grow, and whence it could spread into all the world, as it is doing now. Through all the centuries it had been at work on the Continent of Europe and in England, producing great epochs, making great men and women, and bringing on world movements whose significance can only now be clearly discerned.

We are glad that the agency of Baptists, under the providence of God, in securing soul liberty for mankind is universally and generously recognized by students of history and of the science of government.

Masson in his life of Milton wrote:

> Not to the Church of England, nor to Scottish Presbyterians, nor to English Puritanism at large, does the honor of the first perception of the full principle of liberty of conscience and its first assertion in English speech belong. That honor has to be assigned, I believe, to the Independents generally and the Baptists in particular.

John Locke the philosopher says, "Baptists were the first and only promoters of absolute

liberty—just and true liberty, equal and impartial."

Stoughton, in his ecclesiastical history of England, says that to the Baptists "belongs the honor of presenting in this country the first distinct and broad plea for liberty of conscience."

George Bancroft, in his "History of the United States," writes, "Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was, from the first, the trophy of the Baptists."

In discussing the achievement of bringing about the complete separation of Church and State, Leonard Woolsey Bacon, a Congregationalist, says:

> So far as this work was a work of intelligent conviction and religious faith, the chief honor of it must be given to the Baptists. Other sects, notably the Presbyterians, had been energetic and efficient in demanding their own liberties; the Friends and the Baptists agreed in demanding liberty of conscience and worship and equality before the law for all alike. But the active labor in this cause was mainly done by the Baptists. It is to their consistency and constancy in the warfare against the privileges of the powerful "Standing Order" of New England and of the moribund establishment of the South that we are chiefly indebted for the final triumph in this country of that principle of the separation of Church and State which is one of the largest contributions in the world to civilization and to the church universal.

From America that distinctive is spreading by normal processes to the other nations. State Churches will soon be a troubled memory of by-

gone ages and all will wonder that people professing to be Christians could ever have consented to pervert government and violate the soul's functions in that way. Let us thank God that our denomination has been God's chosen agent in making that unspeakable gift to mankind, and then let us ask what is the next step we are appointed to take as the possessors and advocates of that invaluable distinctive.

VI

THE BAPTIST OBJECTIVE

Now what is our Objective, the goal toward which we have been traveling along the pathway of our distinctive?

It is simple, unmistakably clear, and inescapably imperative. That goal is nothing less than seeing the whole world in possession of that distinctive whole, not a part of the world in possession of it whole, nor the whole world in possession of it in part, but the whole world in possession of it whole.

1. Why Pursue This Objective

There are *six reasons* why we must do it.

(1) That the distinctive exists, not as an interesting and valuable possession of a group, but as one of the necessaries of human life. The whole world must have it whole because *the wholeness of the world* is impossible without it. Mankind was made for it, and it exists for mankind. Some one must give it to the whole race, and evidently the body of people who now have it whole and have had the responsibility of giving it its present vogue, is the very body of people to continue that task until it is done. If they do not, God will be under the necessity of raising up some other body to take the task from our

faithless hands. How much of the world does not have it now? All who have not the gospel of Christ, and that means nearly a billion people. That is a wide and fascinating field for our endeavor. Even among those who have had the gospel, if there is a group that is a State Church elsewhere, they have not the idea whole; if there is any practising baptism as a means of salvation of old or young, they have it not; if any use the two substitutes which grew out of the superstition that baptism is essential to salvation, or if they baptize babies, or if they are under an overhead control instead of practising the original autonomy of the local church, they do not have it whole, even though they may have much of the very gospel itself. No, the world is not yet in possession of it by any means. And the integrity, the wholeness, of the world requires that we or some other body shall put it in possession of this distinctive.

(2) *The wholeness of the gospel* requires that we do that very thing. It is an integral part of the gospel. You cannot take out Christ's words, "Call no man master on earth, for one is your Master, even Christ," and leave the gospel whole. That also requires missions. We must be the most missionary body of people on earth. God seems to have made a special ruling that the gospel should go to the heathen nations with that essential in it, for did he not start modern missions through William Carey, who was the first to take the gospel to India's teeming millions?

And did he not inaugurate foreign missions by Americans through Adoniram Judson who, though brought up in another faith, was led to accept the Baptist distinctive while reading his Bible on board the ship in which he was sailing to Burma, so that he had to change church affiliations at once and then arouse our people to organize a missionary society to support the work? Can we think of it in any other way than that God wanted the gospel with that integral idea in it at the start in India and Burma?

(3) *The wholeness of Jesus' purpose,* which is God's purpose, for mankind requires that they have this distinctive whole. As some one has analyzed it, his purpose for the world religiously is a world of worshipers and doers of the Father's will; politically, a world of equals; socially, a world of brothers; industrially, a world of co-laborers and comrades. That is impossible without our distinctive, by whomsoever it may be bestowed upon the world. The world situation at this very moment is calling mutely but insistently for that reign of Christ. The cure for the ills of our modern life is Christ, and Christ is impossible without the thing that he requires, namely, that people have him alone as Master and have each other as brothers—"all ye are brethren."

(4) *The wholeness of our commission* requires that we do so. A commission takes account of the things essential in it and the time required to perform it. We have procured and apparently secured certain rights for the world at large, in-

cluding ourselves and those who at first were unwilling to grant us our rights, but the inclusive work is not yet done, and the time for which our commissions was given us is not all spent.

(5) *The wholeness of other Christian bodies* who are doing great, constructive work for the world demands that we bestow this distinctive on them. We have had discussions and controversies with them in order to win triumphs over them, but we must now approach them as brothers with something to bestow on them which we have found to have special value. We may tell them how much of a blessing it has all been to us, and that we wish them to have the benefit of it. Our purpose and spirit must be Christly. Those bodies that allow the ideas and ceremonies which came in with the several interferences with that distinctive, need it. It would add to their already great value to the world.

(6) But I now come to the very greatest of all the reasons for bestowing this distinctive in its wholeness upon the whole world, and that is that *the wholeness of Christianity* depends on it. When I speak of a whole Christianity I mean a united or a reunited Christendom. And by a reunited Christendom I mean that union of all the forces of Christianity in one great body for which we all pray and many hope.

There are several things necessary if we are ever to have church union.

First of all, we must recognize the fact that we now have Christian unity. All Christians are one

in Christ by virtue of being in Christ and not by virtue of being in any one church or in a combined church. If you were born again in the heart of Africa and had never heard of any other Christian than the one who brought you to Christ, you would be one with all other Christians because you would sustain exactly the same essential relation to Christ and other Christians that you would sustain if you knew a very large number of them and were active in all the great enterprises of the kingdom of Christ.

There are three tremendous figures of speech which show Christ's relation to his disciples: He the vine and they the branches vitally connected with him and with each other; he the head, and they the body, all members not only of him but of each other; he the chief corner-stone, and they living stones laid down on him and all growing together and constituting the glorious temple of a redeemed humanity. As soon as any one is a Christian he automatically becomes a member of Christ and of the other Christians.

So Christian unity is a fact because there are Christians. Yet many people are saying that Christ's prayer to the Father that they may all be one is kept from being answered by the refusal of people to get into one great church, usually the church to which those particular people belong. There is unity now, for unity is of the spirit, union of the letter; unity is internal and vital, while union is external and more or less mechanical; unity is involuntary and a matter of

the vital breath, while union is voluntary and a matter of arrangement. To be sure, union must be a matter of thought and of loyalty to Christ, but it is not Christian unity and can only come where there is real unity of spirit.

Secondly, we must recognize the fact that we now have much Christian and church cooperation. The Federation of Churches is often a useful thing. It enables churches to work together in general and special activities and to reenforce each other. It has rectified some of its earlier mistakes. Some of its workers used to feel called on to become propagandists for church union without regard to the autonomy of the groups working together. But it may serve a fine purpose. There are other forms of interdenominational fellowship and cooperation which are valuable. Let us thank God for them and keep on growing together.

Thirdly, there can be no church union on known departures from the teachings of our Guide-book. Go back and carefully note the five respects in which the great distinctive has been interfered with, and ask yourself the question, how one who recognizes all the facts of the case can deliberately go into a union which endorses those violations of the teachings of the Word and of the essential functions of human nature.

To be a bit more specific, here are several questions that must be settled by the coalescing bodies:

The question of church polity will have to be decided on. There are three general types of

church government to be found. One is the prelatical. It is based chiefly on the office of bishop. In the New Testament there are three words which designate what we call the ministry, "bishop" "elder," and "pastor," though they indicate different phases of that multiform relationship. That the words bishop and elder were used of the same office is clear from Paul's letter to Titus (1 : 5-7) to appoint "elders in every city . . . if any man is blameless . . . for the bishop must be blameless as God's steward;" and in Peter's First Epistle, fifth chapter, in which he exhorts the elders and says he is their fellow elder and in effect calls them pastors, which means shepherds of the flock. The Greek word *episcopos,* translated "bishop," means overseer and refers to the executive work of the minister; the Greek word *presbuteros* means "elder" and refers to the advisory and instructive work of the minister; the word *poimen,* translated "pastor," means "shepherd," and refers to the personal care which the minister is to bestow on the people who are his flock. The three words support and complete each other and indicate the manifold nature of the minister's relationships and ministry. Doctor Lightfoot, of the Church of England, proves by careful interpretation of the Scriptures that the two words, bishop and elder, designated one and the same office in the New Testament.

By the prelatical type of church government I mean the *episcopal.* It is called prelatical, which

is the Latin word for "preferred," because there was one preferred group, and that was the ministry, not in its wholeness as composed of bishop (overseer), elder, and shepherd, but in its single phase of overseership. That overhead control varies from the perfect autocracy of the Roman Catholic Church, in which the officers claim to speak and act as rulers in God's place, to the most democratic form of it in the Methodist Church, where the overhead control is at its lowest, though it is there.

Shall the united church have that form of organization? If so, we cannot retain our distinctive whole.

A second form of polity is the *presbyterial,* which is built upon the eldership and has far less of the overhead control than has the episcopal type. Shall the united church have that form of government? If so, our distinctive cannot be maintained whole.

The third form of government is the *congregational,* in which the authority resides entirely in the people composing the local group, not coming down from an overhead body but arising from the constituting body, a real democracy of soul. If one individual has as much inherent right to deal personally with God and direct his own life as any other individual, so one group has as much inherent right as any other group and cannot, in the nature of life itself, both natural and Christian, be under the control of any other group or set of men. That must be regarded as settled.

The relation of the various groups to each other is that of voluntary cooperation in extending the kingdom of Christ over mankind. Does any "church union" involve the surrender of that basic and vital principle? Then we should lose our distinctive, and some one would have to recover and reestablish it.

A second question that will have to be settled in the united church is that of *the initial ceremony.* Shall it be baptism or the substitutes that owe their origin to the superstition that baptism is a saving rather than a symbolical ordinance, or shall it be all three? We could not interfere with the freedom of any group to use those substitutes if they so wish, but we cannot make use of them or endorse the use of them in the church to which we should belong. This position is not a matter of prejudice, but of principle. If we surrender, we do not surrender baptism but the distinctive that lies back of it and requires it.

A third question: Who shall be baptized and become members of the composite church, professed believers, or babes, or both? Even though we may not consider baptism as a means of saving the babies we shall not accept that interference with the working of our universal distinctive. Only one who has personally died to sin and risen to a new life can obey Christ in the ordinance which assumes and declares that. I once baptized a young man who was not converted at the time. Soon afterward he saw his mistake, accepted Christ and was baptized again. But the

first time it was not the burial of a dead man, a man who had died to sin, nor was it the resurrection of a living man, but of one still dead in sin. No one who was immersed before becoming an actual Christian has been baptized in reality though he has been in form.

The propagation of this principle is an essential move in the direction of church union, an end most ardently desired by many people.

A fourth question must be faced, and that is *the question of the Lord's Supper.* There are several views of that wonderful memorial.

First is the view that the bread and wine are changed by the blessing of the minister into the actual, literal body and blood of Jesus. That view was developed by the Church of Rome and is called *transubstantiation,* meaning a change of substance. It is one of the reasons why the priest drinks the wine, for it would not do to lose a single drop of that precious blood, as might happen when passing it around among the people, while the people eat the bread. Shall the composite church accept that view? If they do, our distinctive is gone.

There is a second view called *consubstantiation.* Martin Luther invented this. He denied that the bread and wine were changed into the veritable, literal body and blood of Jesus, but affirmed his " real presence " there, " in, with, and under the bread and wine," and that it was a means of grace, because you actually partook of him. When told that Christ was only at the right

hand of God he replied that the right hand of God was everywhere. If we adopt this view, that Christ exists "along with" the substance, we surrender our distinctive.

A third view is the *sacramental,* that the ordinances are channels of grace. This is held by the Church of England. All these forms are really due to a sort of sacerdotalism, the existence of a sacred order in whom the church really centers, so that the church practically means the officials. Everything is created by the apostles and their successors, so the argument runs; the priest is ordained by them; without the priest there can be no full worship of God; the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are the means that must create and maintain the spiritual life. The Episcopal Church says baptism is "the great sacrament of our regeneration," and the Supper, or Eucharist, as they call it, is termed "our chief means of communion with our Lord. Dr. R. J. Campbell puts it thus:

> The incarnation, the atonement, the extension of both *in the sacraments,* the ministry which guards them and the visible society itself as the sphere of sacrificial grace, all these seem to me to imply each other.

John Calvin taught a modified view that, while the bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Christ, they are the instrumental means of his presence and the Supper is therefore a *means of grace.*

Zwingli was nearer the truth in saying that the Supper is a memorial or remembrance of the

sacrifice for sins offered once for all by Christ, and that it is not a continuation or repetition of the original sacrifice of Christ as taught by the Roman Church and by others in the modified ways I have pointed out; but Zwingli did not grasp the idea fully.

The true view is that it is *a symbol,* purely that, *nothing more,* just as baptism is a symbol, baptism symbolizing the emergence of the new life out of death and the Supper symbolizing the feeding of that new life on Christ "who is our life," who said he was the bread of life "that came down from heaven." When he said, "This is my body," "This is my blood," he used a metaphor, which is an unexpanded simile. If he had said, "This is like my body," etc., it would have been a simile, which is an expanded metaphor, and would have meant precisely the same thing.

The other views that I have indicated, are not only foreign to the Scriptures but to the basic ideas of life and grace. To make the ordinances channels through which God's grace can flow to us "limits the universality of divine grace," as Doctor Fairbairn points out.

The Supper is an object-lesson. It helps you to form a mental picture of the Christ in giving himself for your redemption and nourishment. It enshrines that truth, keeps it clear in the mind, appeals to the heart's gratitude and devotion and stimulates the desire to be more worthy of it all. The soul grows hungry and thirsty in your activ-

ities and that drives you to him, so that this object-lesson makes it all vivid.

Shall we take the transubstantiation or consubstantiation or the sacramental view, or shall we have the simple, clear, and common-sense truth as taught in the Word? That matter will have to be settled if we have a composite church. No question is ever settled at all until it is settled aright. To surrender the truth that it is a symbol, an object-lesson, a sort of keepsake, is to initiate a process that will destroy our distinctive and necessitate its recovery and reinstatement in the world by some other body of people.

2. Difficulties in the Way

There are *obstinate difficulties* in the way of our success, some to be found within our own body, some without.

(1) *The Outside Difficulties.* If we get our distinctive accepted by the whole world it will be through their voluntary acceptance of it, not under any sort of compulsion, for we are not able to use compulsion, we have none to use, and compulsion of others would destroy the distinctive. To accept this would require the abandonment by them of what now stands in the way of it. Here are some things that stand in the way:

Habit for one thing. After practising the two substitutes for baptism and practising infant baptism for centuries no church will find it an easy task to change its habits.

Tradition is another difficulty. The ideas and

practises of the denominations have been handed down through generations and, in some instances, for centuries, and tradition has its influence over us all.

Prejudice stands in the way, and it does not characterize one group alone, but we all have it. The conflicts of the past generated prejudices, and the echoes of those stormy days salute the eager ear even now. We may deny to each other the respect and fraternal regard to which all true Christians are entitled, and we may wrongly question each other's sincerity. We may find it difficult to go to them in the right spirit, and they may not always receive our approaches in the most loving way, because of prejudices growing out of the past and out of misrepresentations made on both sides.

Another difficulty is *the spirit of controversy* rather than of counsel, of conflict rather than of cooperation. Whatever we do in trying to put others in possession of the distinctive we must do as friends and not as foes, in the spirit of comity and not of conflict, with the desire to promote truth rather than to win a triumph.

Still another difficulty, already implied, is found in *institutions and organizations* that have been constructed on principles in vital conflict with our distinctive and whose very existence depends on forbidding their devotees to receive this distinctive or even investigate it. Such institutions require the " closed mind " in their adherents. The historic, gigantic instance of this is the Church

of Rome. The powers that brought about the interferences with the working of our distinctive are the powers that brought into its development the Catholic Church. Built upon those perversions of the New Testament church it has through the centuries perpetuated them by union with the State, wherever that has been possible, and has never yet dissolved that unholy union except under compulsion. That Church is not susceptible to change, but many individuals within its ranks may be brought to see and receive the distinctive. Many of its devotees are simple-minded and conscientious, but its essential structure makes its own reformation and its reconstruction on a Biblical and gospel pattern apparently impossible.

There are other tyrannies that require the "closed mind," and they erect almost insuperable barriers against any approach to their people with this truth. But there is a way to meet it. We may so saturate the public mind with the truth as to lessen the success of their propaganda, and we may win numberless individuals among them.

Another difficulty is the prevailing feeling against *the preaching of "doctrine."* "Doctrinal preaching" is very much disliked. But two things may be said. One is that a "doctrine" is a teaching, and teaching is always in order. Besides, doctrine should be lived in such a way as to impress people that it is vital rather than merely "doctrinaire." The prejudice is not so much against a teaching as against what is called "theo-

logical" teaching in technical terms. We have had enough of these terms. Let us away with them. The "common people" are glad to hear the truth I am speaking of when told in a straightforward way. They wonder why we do not do more of it.

(2) Here are some of the *Difficulties we find Within Our Own Body*, besides the prejudices I have alluded to and the feelings left by the old experiences of controversy:

a. After centuries of struggle with other religious bodies over our right and the right of all men to have complete religious liberty, we are glad to rest and be "*at ease* in Zion." But it may be said that there are sleepless enemies of that truth, and they are now at work in an effort to control sacred interests in every country.

b. After a high degree of success in bestowing the distinctive on our North American Continent, and seeing it spread over the world, and seeing State Churches give way before it, we may feel that *others* have it in such degree that they *will not need any further aid from us.* But already I have pointed out that the idea in its wholeness is not in possession of any other strong body of people, and perhaps a billion people know strictly nothing at all about it.

c. There is a very reasonable desire on our part to enter more deeply into *Christian fellowship and cooperation* with all Christians and show them that we are more than mere fighters and wranglers, that we are their colaborers and com-

rades. The result of that is a silence on the subject of the distinctive which is unfaithfulness to it, and which is a surprise to all who come to learn how vital and fascinating it is. If we continue to prize laziness above loyalty, fellowship with others above fidelity to them, our unfinished task will be taken out of our hands and given to others. The truth is, we ourselves have been saying so little about it our own people are not informed on the subject, and our friends of other churches are surprised at learning what it is, surprised at the simple and common-sense and fascinating character of it, and surprised at us for our silence about such a remarkable and vital matter. We are forming habits of fatal reticence on that particular subject that it will be difficult to break up.

d. A fourth difficulty is the presence of *problems* among us which sometimes bulk large and seem formidable. But a problem is a sign of life. Some one has said that youth is rich in unsolved problems, and they constitute its charm and its promise. When any one ceases to have problems he is dead, though he may not know it. Ours are the problems that always grow out of a democracy, and are integral in a spiritual democracy. Here are some of them:

(*a*) The problem of *liberty and leadership.* The primary need of any cause is leaders. But, when leadership becomes drivership or rulership, it lessens the liberty of the individual who is ruled. Yet, in spite of its perils, leadership is

essential. An autocracy can do fairly well without leaders, for it centers in a ruling family or in institutions with fixed habits and traditions that hold the subjects under control and get results. Our churches are not carried to success by autocratic officials, or by an infallible institution, or by mystical ceremonies and ritual, but by leaders chosen by the people themselves, who in turn hold the leaders responsible to them, their equals and the source of their power. We have the double problem of discovering them, then of preparing and following them. We face the manifold danger of failing to secure such leadership, or of allowing it to become tyranny or of failing to follow it. Those perils have made us the more watchful. We have always had capable leaders, and we shall always be under the necessity of praying for and utilizing them.

(*b*) *Democracy and discipline* has always been one of our problems. All discipline is self-discipline. We debate and express our individual views, as is perfectly right, and then accept the will of the majority. One result of the discussion and, maybe, wrangling is that we all become educated by that very process. The very best opportunity in the world for self-discipline is offered by a spiritual democracy.

(*c*) There is the problem of *spirituality and culture*. That used to be a more severe difficulty with us. Our pioneers usually sprang up from among the people, often without much culture. And, because the instruments of culture were

usually in the hands of the worldly State Church, they often had a dislike for it. There is a constant tide of increase from the uncultivated, the "common people," and we have always had the untrained among us. But we have been solving that problem from the beginning in our country and the pioneers are engaged in doing so everywhere. In early days in America the fathers felt the need of a better-trained ministry, and most of our colleges were founded with that as their aim. Some of those schools thus founded are: Brown, 1764; Colby, 1815; Colgate, 1819; Shurtleff, 1827; Georgetown, 1829; Acadia, 1831; the others in due time. Our theological seminaries were founded, beginning with Colgate, 1820; Newton, 1825; Rochester, 1850; Louisville, 1859; Crozer, 1867; MacMaster, Kansas City, Southwestern, Berkeley, Northern, Eastern following later; and several also among the Negro Baptists.

We are hearing the call for better equipment and answering it. As our fathers met the problems of their day it seems hardly possible that we should be less noble than they in perfecting the schools we now have and in establishing others as they may be needed, for we have greater wealth than they had, and we live in an atmosphere more favorable to the establishment and support of schools. No doubt many men of wealth and consecration will be putting larger and still larger sums into the establishment and equipment of all needed schools and benevolent institutions.

We have already produced men of letters, and women too, and real spirituality is not incompatible with the very highest culture of the soul in mental, social, and esthetic power, else it would be a reflection on our Maker. We see that. We are solving the problem.

(*d*) There is the problem of *socializing the individual.* In some nations the social entity has been everything, the individual nothing. The integral idea in any democracy is the value of the individual. In an autocracy he may be ignored. Social culture must never destroy the individuality. Two things are strictly required—that the individual be socialized, be made one of a number, and that he be still more of an individual with all his values increased. Individualty must come to its best when socialized—that is the law of God. While we recognize the right of each and every member of the church to an equal part with the others in all privileges and work, we must put each one into that team-work which is his destiny.

(*e*) We face another problem, that of *unifying ourselves.* There is a threefold cure for all the ills we feel so keenly in our ranks today: To preach Christ fully, the Christ of the New Testament, the Christ of history, the Christ of Christian experience; to set forth the Baptist distinctive in its essence and clarity, stripping it of all accretions, and leaving it in all its wonderful fascination to appeal to the souls of men; to lead our people to undertake in cooperation the largest, most exacting tasks at home and abroad.

3. Results of Seeking the Objective

Immeasurable results will follow our effort to discharge our sacred responsibilities to God, to our own constituency and to our fellow men everywhere. It will give us *a new missionary enthusiasm.* If we are to bestow our distinctive on all who have it not, we shall try to find those who are without it. That will lead us to the discovery that there are about one and three-quarter billions of people in the world, and that at least one billion, or more than half, of them belong to other religions than the Christian. The dazzling numbers and distressing needs stir the missionary instincts within us. They need Christ, every one of them needs him, and, in their relational life, they must have this great truth of ours. Let us once see that, and a new missionary ardor which can never be cooled will glow and grow within us. Deficits in our missionary treasuries will never again be known.

It will restore the old passion for saving the lost, and it will stimulate our *new evangelism.* The old motive for bringing people to know our Saviour and Lord will have a new setting and reenforcement. The first duty of each Christian to his Lord is to " go " and find those who have him not, whether it is to go across the room or across the street or across the State or across the ocean. It will mean *personal* evangelism.

It will awaken a *new sense of our stewardship,* stewardship of our time, our talent, our material

treasures—the trusts committed to us to be imparted to others.

It will compel us to *cultivate and coordinate all the virtues,* to appreciate and appropriate those virtues which our friends and fellow Christians of other denominations who have not our distinctive whole, have cultivated. We see how they have been able to make up for that lack in a measure. One denomination has given aggressive and emotional energy to evangelism and administration and has done wonders even with its handicap. We may imitate that energy and enthusiasm and, with our great distinctive, should achieve much more. Another denomination has pursued methods of education and discipline and reverent public worship with rich results. With the advantage of this great distinctive of ours why should we not equal or even surpass them? Still others hold their people to stedfast efforts with liberal use of ritual and education and esthetic and social culture; and there is nothing in our distinctive to prevent the largest possible use of all means of culture and worship if we make the proper discriminations.

To be sure different temperaments move in different directions, but all may move under the domination of this principle so essential in the total life of mankind. There is not a high form of true culture, whether esthetic, intellectual, artistic, or social, or any possible degree of Christian activity which need be omitted or lessened by us who cherish that principle. In the old days

of controversy our fathers sometimes felt distaste for their methods of culture and activity. But we shall emulate them in their virtues and thus give our distinctive a new opportunity to embody itself in all the forms of perfection of which we dream. It will stir the motive of Christian fellowship as we strive to crown our fellow Christians of other denominations with what has been so rich a possession of our own.

This will be a unifying power within the individual because it searches the soul, awakens responsibility, and binds him to Christ; a unifying power within each church and the denomination because it gives us fellowship in the unvarying truth of life; a unifying power within the ranks of Christendom, for it furnishes the motive and means for organization that will have an unmovable basis and will leave each free to interpret the Bible as his experiences require. It will relieve Christianity of those unbiblical usages which still bear witness to the superstitions out of which they arose.

Our days of highest prosperity were when we bore witness to the distinctive without flinching, even though it involved us in controversy. But greater days are ahead of us. We are to learn that we can do more with our voluntary cooperation than can those who are under overhead control. We are yet to see greater gifts for missions than we have ever had, greater educational institutions than we now have, greater hospitals and homes for the needy and greater freedom

than were ever known before. Our distinctive has shown what it can do in times of trouble and persecution. Let us give it a chance in the time of peace and prosperity.

A new art is needed, and the time is ripe for it, the art of the Advocate of our Distinctive. The advocacy must be personal rather than professional, practised by the laymen as well as by the ministers. The advocates of many cults are doing this. They go into homes, raise questions, and then try to settle them in their own way. They are always ready to talk to neighbors and friends about their remarkable ideas, and thus they win many converts. Our aim must be different—simply to put them in possession of the most simple and common-sense and Biblical and practical idea known, and to do it without a desire for victory or for converts, but for the enrichment of our friends with this great truth.

Our efforts to put the whole world in possession of our distinctive whole need not be, should not be, controversial. Controversies usually arise out of different interpretations of the Scriptures, and there are no such differences in this case in the matters concerned. The three lines of inquiry have been conducted by experts of all denominations and of no denomination, and they have all made their final reports—as to the meaning of the words under discussion, as to the original activities and circumstances to which the words apply, and as to the practise in the early centuries. In other words, the dictionary-makers, lexicog-

raphers, have forever settled for us the meaning of the three Greek words—*baptizo,* to immerse; *rhantizo,* to sprinkle; *echeo,* to pour—and the impossibility of an interchange of meaning between the three or any two of them; the interpreters of the Scriptures, exegetes, have settled for all people the use which the Scriptures make of those words so that its purpose in using them and the context in which they are used make the meaning of the dictionary as clear as sunlight; the historians have told us when and why changes were made. All of these matters are settled. We need not argue. We need only say: "You have consulted your dictionary and read your Bible and your historian; now return to the abandoned truths, let us close the breach made by departures from those truths so that we may have the old fellowships restored."

We have been silent about it so long that many of our own people are wondering what it is we really hold which makes us different from others. We have been tired of controversy and have wanted to show the others that we can be "good fellows" and cooperate with them. That is right so far, but we have withheld from our own people what they have a right to know and sorely need to know.

And people of other denominations are wondering what it is that makes us different from them, and why it is that we never say anything about it. Some of them imagine and even say that we do not think a man can be saved without

being baptized when, as a matter of fact, no one teaching that idea about baptism is a Baptist at all.

When they hear our story, simply and frankly and fraternally told, they are usually charmed with it, and they always wonder why people who hold such a fascinating and essential truth are not telling everybody about it.

Surprising results will always follow the right sort of advocacy of it. I have had some delightful experiences in telling it both in public and in private. When I am to speak on it in my own pulpit I usually announce it a week or two in advance and frankly tell the people what they may expect. I also say that I am announcing it in advance so that any one who is anxious to hear such a discussion may be sure to come and that any one who does not care to hear it may have the opportunity of staying away. No one has ever seemed to stay away purposely, and I have never failed to hear surprise and delight expressed at the fascinating character of our views. I give one instance.

In a certain city where I was preaching a young couple came, she a Baptist and he a member of another church. She brought her letter, and he became a regular attendant with her. They are a cultured and lovable couple. I called on them one evening and, when something was said about his attending, I remarked, "I wish you could come all the way with us." "I am thinking of it," he replied. Then I began to tell him what really made one a Baptist. At once he spoke up

and said: "Yes, I heard you on that subject. I was there when you announced it in advance, and I said to myself I must not miss it, for I wanted to be informed. I heard it, and it answered to something within my own soul." The result was that I baptized him in a little while and he is now a prominent and useful member of that church.

We have the most popular idea on earth. The world is ready for it now as never before. Preachers and teachers and all the members may win new victories for Christ and for humanity by informing themselves carefully, living it sensibly, and advocating it wisely and lovingly.

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